



NEWS RELEASE

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Keep the Gold in Your Golden Years

Seniors can be particularly vulnerable to identity theft, fraud

SACRAMENTO -- While celebrating California's senior consumers in May during Older Americans Month, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) is encouraging seniors to protect their privacy and fight identity theft to safeguard their retirement money.

"Like all of us, seniors should be concerned about protecting their privacy and keeping identity thieves at bay," said DCA Director Charlene Zettel. "Often, however, there are extra steps seniors should consider."

One significant issue for seniors is the greater chance of loneliness as their activity levels slow. Many professionals provide older Californians with quality care and friendship in their golden years.

However, seniors and their family members should be aware that unscrupulous people will take advantage of this.

Zettel encourages seniors and their family members to make sure personal documents and possessions are not accessible to in-home caregivers. Also, seniors should never trust visitors or new friends with personal information, such as driver license numbers, Social Security numbers, financial account information, passwords or Personal Identification Numbers (PINs).

"The most important step is to be careful who you give your personal information to," said Zettel.

"Don't fall prey to fraudsters who try to garner your personally identifying information -- whether it's over the phone, through the mail or over the Internet."

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Keep the Gold in Your Golden Years

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DCA maintains records on many licensees, including most health care professionals like doctors, nurses, physical therapists and speech and hearing pathologists, as well as accountants, contractors and funeral homes. Seniors can check DCA's license records to make sure licensees are in good standing.

Information on licensed individuals and businesses is available anytime on the DCA Web site: www.dca.ca.gov or by calling our toll-free Consumer Information number: 1-800-952-5210. You can also access the "Scambusters Kit for California Seniors" at www.dca.ca.gov/ced/senior_scam.htm.

Identity theft prevention information is available through DCA's California Office of Privacy Protection at www.privacy.ca.gov or 1-866-785-9663.

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*Privacy, health, financial and other senior consumer topics will be presented during California's **Senior Summit 2006: Protecting and Serving California's Aging Population** on Friday, May 12, 2006, at the Sacramento Convention Center. The **free** daylong event is open to anyone interested in senior protection issues. The event is presented by the California Department of Consumer Affairs and is sponsored by Consumer Action. For more information, visit www.seniorsummit.ca.gov.*